



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICE

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The Honorable Board of Supervisors
County of Los Angeles
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Supervisors:

**AUTHORIZATION TO USE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY FUNDS FOR
DEPARTMENTAL TECHNOLOGY PROJECTS
(3 VOTES)**

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT YOUR BOARD:

- (1) Approve and authorize the use of \$96,523, plus a 10% contingency from the Information Technology Fund, to acquire a Web-Integrated Automated Consumer Information System proposed by the Department of Consumer Affairs.

PURPOSE OF RECOMMENDED ACTION

In their December 16, 2002 meeting, the ITF Executive Committee recommended support of a project proposed by the Department of Consumer Affairs (CA). Your Board's approval of the recommended action will provide funding in the amount of \$96,523, plus a 10% contingency.

Implementation of Strategic Plan Goal

A web-integrated automated consumer information system supports the County's Strategic Plan Goal for Service Excellence by providing the public with access to over 350 informational messages and web links to other County, state, and federal resources for consumer information. A web platform is a more effective way of disseminating recorded and web-based information.

JUSTIFICATION

In December 2002, the ITF Executive Committee recommended Board approval to develop CA's Web-Integrated Automated Consumer Information System.

The Department of CA receives more than 350,000 calls per year from County residents seeking information on consumer problems, small claims court procedures, real estate matters, cable television complaints, and dispute settlements. For the past five (5) years, CA owned and operated a basic auto-attendant telephone system. This system allowed callers to have their inquiries answered by recorded telephone messages without needing to speak with a CA counselor.

In August 2002, the CA's automated system became inoperable and could not be repaired. Due to the system's failure, staff members or volunteer counselors must personally handle all public calls; and calls are limited to normal business hours. The result for most callers is either a busy signal or long waiting periods. The system acquired through this award will replace CAs' failed system and add the web-based functionality provided by the text to speech technology.

FISCAL IMPACT/FINANCING

Upon approval by your Board, the CA will receive an ITF award of \$96,523, plus a 10% contingency. The funds will cover the cost to procure hardware, software, and obtain professional services to train CA staff on operation of the system. Acquisition of the system will also require CA to absorb the ongoing maintenance costs.

There is no other fiscal impact.

FACTS AND PROVISIONAL/LEGAL REQUIREMENT

There are no legal requirements.

IMPACT OF CURRENT SERVICES

The CA is working with the Internal Services Department (ISD) to implement an automated consumer information system that also utilizes a web interface to disseminate information to the public. This system will provide web-based and recorded information to consumers on a 24x7 basis through the department's website and the system's auto-attendant telephone feature. The proposed system uses an advanced text-to-speech delivery system that links callers to the web and allows them to telephonically interact with the website. Callers can be linked to a web page and a text-to-speech application will read the web page information to them on the telephone. The text-to-speech technology will also

allow the CA to link to County departments, state and federal consumer agencies, and other web based consumer resources to expand the information available to the public. CA has identified the following benefits for the new web-based system:

- Provides on-going consumer counseling services to more than 350,000 consumers who call the department annually.
- Provides the public access to more than 350 information messages and web links, including both English and Spanish.
- Eliminates the expense of hiring additional telephone counseling staff.
- Expands the amount and type of information available to residents without having to incur expenses to load information directly on CA's website.
- Expands access to information to the reported 65% of County residents that currently do not have access to the web.
- Positions the County as the model for other governmental entities by being at the forefront of technology (linking telephones and the web).
- Provides ADA compliance by linking phone-enabled callers, such as the blind, to CA information and resources.

The CA will work with this office and the ISD to ensure that the integrity of the County's security environment is maintained.

CONCLUSION

Your Board's approval of the recommended action will authorize the use of ITF funds in the amount of \$96,523, plus 10% contingency funding, and will result in CA providing a more efficient and effective means of delivering services to the residents of the County of Los Angeles.

Respectfully submitted,



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Chief Information Officer

JWF:JEW
YD:ygd

c: Pastor Herrera, Director, Consumer Affairs
Joan Ouderkirk, Director, Internal Services Department
Chiu Lee, CAO Budget Analyst
ITF Project File

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